



Presentation on Transportation Needs in Kalamazoo County

I'm Dallas Williams, Director of Transportation for the City of Portage. On behalf of the city, I would like to express my appreciation for the opportunity to interact directly with the decision makers regarding transportation needs in the Kalamazoo County area. The City of Portage is a sister city with the City of Kalamazoo and is fortunate to be served by two major highways passing through our city: I-94 in an east-west direction and US-131 in a north-south direction.

The City of Portage is a growing community approaching 50,000 in population and it is the home of the Pfizer Corporation, The Stryker Corporation, a regional shopping center, Crossroads Mall, and many other excellent commercial establishments. Due to its location and accessibility from I-94 and US-131, the continued economic growth of the city is substantially impacted by the condition of these two major highways. I-94 through the City of Portage is of particular concern.

Traffic volumes on I-94 throughout Kalamazoo continue to increase but congestion is particularly heavy between Sprinkle Road and 12th Street, especially during the peak traffic hours. On an average day, I-94 through the City of Portage carries an average of 85,500 cars per day. We believe it is critically important to the economic welfare of the City of Portage and Kalamazoo County to widen I-94 to six lanes and improve the US-131/I-94 and South Westnedge Avenue interchanges. The reconstruction of the South Westnedge Avenue/I-94 interchange to a modern single point urban interchange is essential to get traffic safely and efficiently on and off I-94 to South Westnedge Avenue as this street is the prime destination for many drivers wanting to access the Portage Commercial Area.

We are very fortunate in Kalamazoo County to have Bobbi Welke, Southwest Region Engineer, and her talented staff headquartered in our area. Ms. Welke has worked cooperatively with local officials in completing the design and environmental work for the I-94 widening project and plans and specifications are on the shelf only waiting for funds to become available. We are disappointed that the I-94 improvements are not included in the Five Year Plan by MDOT and would urge that funds be made available to begin construction on this badly needed project at the earliest possible date. The expansion of I-94 is the highest priority transportation improvement project in Kalamazoo County as indicated by the Kalamazoo Area Transportation Study, Kalamazoo Regional Chamber of Commerce, the City of Portage and the City of Kalamazoo.

The City of Portage is committed to sharing in the cost of the I-94 improvements and, in fact, has earmarked approximately 19 million dollars for infrastructure improvements at the South Westnedge Avenue/I-94 interchange and on South Westnedge Avenue in conjunction with the interchange improvements. This is a major commitment of funds for the City of Portage and is intended to demonstrate the city's commitment to the I-94 project, to the safety of drivers using both I-94 and South Westnedge Avenue and to the continued economic development of the city.

While we understand the financial constraints and transportation needs throughout the State, we believe that the widening of I-94 from Sprinkle Road to 12th Street is the highest transportation need in Southwestern Michigan and should be addressed at the earliest possible time.

Again, I appreciate the opportunity to discuss our community's infrastructure needs and priorities.

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